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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZANU](#) [SF](#) [ZM](#)  
SUBJECT: A DIASPORA PERSPECTIVE ON ZIMBABWE POLITICAL  
DYNAMICS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Madeline Q. Seidenstricker.  
Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a meeting with Poloff on July 15, 2009, George Sibotshiwe, former spokesman for Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) President Morgan Tsvangirai and a Zimbabwean national residing in South Africa, provided his analysis of changing political dynamics in Zimbabwe. He said Tsvangirai was under heavy criticism from some of the top MDC leadership for lack of progress on outstanding issues. He discussed the political strategy of President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party to discredit Tsvangirai as an authority in Zimbabwe. Sibotshiwe had no hope that SADC would intervene to enforce compliance with the Global Political Agreement to improve the political situation, but thought SADC might be influenced to address the economic crisis, which could be used to bring about results on the political front. End summary.

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TSVANGIRAI LOSING SUPPORT?  
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¶2. (C) Sibotshiwe worried that Tsvangirai could be losing political support. He said participants at the MDC Caucus meeting on July 13 were "very angry" with Tsvangirai for failing to make progress on the outstanding issues, e.g. positions of Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono and Attorney General Johannes Tomana and swearing in of Agriculture Deputy Minister-designate Roy Bennett and governors. He said Tsvangirai is very defensive of the inclusive government because if it failed, Tsvangirai would take it as a personal failure. Sibotshiwe added, "This government is going to limp on until kingdom come with no progress on democratic reform" until President Robert Mugabe dies or the people become restless enough to take action, which he said was highly unlikely. Sibotshiwe predicts that Tsvangirai will lose 30-35 percent of his votes by next June if emigration trends continue at current rates. He criticized the MDC and Tsvangirai specifically for failing to promote the enfranchisement of the Zimbabwean diaspora in order to capture those votes.

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MUGABE STILL IN CONTROL  
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¶3. (C) Sibotshiwe perceives Mugabe's storming out of the meeting with Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson on the margins of the African Union Summit as a strategy to undermine Tsvangirai's perceived authority days after Tsvangirai met with President Obama and European leaders. In Sibotshiwe's view, Mugabe sent the message that regardless of Tsvangirai's standing on the international stage, he has no control in Zimbabwe. He added, "Tsvangirai was given power in theory by the Global Political Agreement, but not power in practice."

14. (C) Sibotshiwe also commented on ZANU-PF political dynamics. He recently launched the African Democratic Institute (ADI) with headquarters in Johannesburg and through which he conducts democratic development activities in Zimbabwe (more information septel). Through ADI's work in Matabeleland, Sibotshiwe learned that there has been a genuine split in ZANU-PF. He said all of the ZANU-PF party structures there had converted to ZAPU. He said this occurred about 2 1/2 months ago when ZAPU re-emerged with an active, although not strong, presence on the ground.

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SADC DONE WITH POLITICAL CRISIS IN ZIMBABWE  
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15. (C) Sibotshiwe said his contacts in President Jacob Zuma's office told him they were waiting for South Africa's term as Southern African Development Community (SADC) Chair to expire and let the next chair deal with Zimbabwe. Sibotshiwe said, "SADC is not going to solve (the problems in Zimbabwe)" because the region's leaders think they have resolved the political crisis. Sibotshiwe claimed that Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete told him, "The problem is solved." He said South African officials had told top MDC leaders to "deal with it" and compared negotiations with Mugabe to the ANC's negotiations with former South African President F.W. de Klerk. Sibotshiwe does think, however, that SADC could be convinced to get more involved in addressing the economic crisis in Zimbabwe in order to bolster stability in the region.

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SOUTH AFRICA POSSIBLY MORE HELPFUL UNDER ZUMA  
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16. (C) Sibotshiwe suggested the U.S. engage with South Africa on providing solutions to the economic crisis in Zimbabwe by offering to tie specific assistance to specific benchmarks. He believes South Africa under Zuma's leadership may be willing to broker a deal to get Mugabe's cooperation. Sibotshiwe said since Zuma came into power, the South African Government (SAG) has been more responsive to his requests, adding that his greatest success has come by channeling his requests through the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). For example, he said he complained to COSATU about its and the SAG's lack of action on illegal diamond mining. Within days COSATU issued a statement on the subject and a Kimberley Process group went to Zimbabwe to investigate, which Sibotshiwe believes the SAG put in motion in response to COSATU's interventions. He lamented that MDC had neglected COSATU and the relationship was "not good." He added that his dealings with COSATU were as an interested individual, not representing MDC.

17. (C) Comment: Sibotshiwe has lost influence within the MDC and is no longer in Tsvangirai's inner circle. While he has voiced strong criticism of Tsvangirai's tactics in private, his agenda is to promote democracy and not to undermine Tsvangirai's support. Sibotshiwe purposely has kept a low profile in carrying out ADI activities, such as work with the National Constitutional Assembly on the people-driven constitutional process.

18. (C) Sibotshiwe is a good example of the interest level and involvement of the Zimbabwe diaspora in what is happening on the ground in their home country. While most diaspora in South Africa do not have Sibotshiwe's level of access to key political players and resources, average Zimbabweans here are observing events in Zimbabwe with great interest and take every opportunity to comment via radio, newspapers, civil society organizations and other venues. End comment.

CONNERS